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Advertising | Stuart Elliott

New Ways to Make Noise? Well, That's Show Business

MUCH as Sol Hurok was an impresario for the 1950's and 1960's, bringing Soviet entertainers to American stages, Jay Coleman is an impresario for the 1990's, bringing the world's entertainers to American marketers.

Mr. Coleman is a pioneer in a growing field known as entertainment marketing, whose practitioners seek to sell products in fresh, untraditional 'fashion by exploiting consumers' fascination with show business, celebrities and popular culture. He is best known for matching Michael Jackson with Pepsi-Cola and the Rolling Stones with Jovan Musk.

"There is an approach when a company asks, itself, 'Is there a different way to make a lot of noise?' " Mr. Coleman said during a recent interview in a memorabilia-filled conference room at the Manhattan headquarters of Entertainment Marketing and Communications International Ltd., of which he is founder and, president. "That is what we're all about."

The project that has perhaps brought Mr. Coleman, who is 41 years old the most acclaim, not to mention a measure of noisy notoriety, was a special live edition of Fox Broadcasting's "In Living Color" on Jan. 26, sponsored by Frito-Lay's Doritos tortilla chips. The stunt lured a hefty 20 million to 25 million viewers from CBS's telecast of the halftime festivities during Super Bowl XXVI.

The special with a mouthful of a title - "The Doritos Zaptime/'In Living Color' Super Halftime Party" was based on an idea of Mr. Coleman's for Super Bowl XXV in 1991: a "Hammertime Halftime" that would have featured a performance by the rap musician Hammer on Fox, sponsored by Pepsi. Time constraints, and the Persian Gulf crisis, scotched that idea.

In the meantime, Pepsi's Roger Enrico, with whom Mr. Coleman had discussed the project, became chairman of Frito-Lay, which, like Pepsi, is owned by Pepsico Inc. So Mr. Coleman proposed the idea again to Mr. Enrico, this time for Frito-Lay, and "Zaptime" was born as a promotional vehicle for a new bite-sized version of Doritos.

In retrospect, Mr. Coleman, Frito Lay and Fox say they we ' re happy with the special, which marked the first time a network offered counter programming to a Super Bowl. In deed, they are already discussing plans for a halftime special during Super Bowl XXVII next January.

"During the most marketing-intensive day of the year, we found a way to cut through the clutter," Mr. Coleman said.

Yet Frito-Lay does not mask its disappointment with several aspects of the show. And that underscores the primary pitfall of entertainment marketing: it involves elements that cannot be controlled by even the most obsessive-compulsive of corporations.

"We're pleased, but we're not necessarily satisfied," said Steve Liguori, Frito-Lay's vice president of marketing in Dallas. "We'd like to do better on the second pass."

Perhaps most distressing was a skit called "Men on Football," featuring two cast members of "In Living Color," Damon Wayans and David Alan Grier, portraying flamboyant homosexual characters who adlibbed provocative statements of a personal nature about the actor Richard Gere and the athlete Carl Lewis.

That was particularly discomfiting for a company like Pepsico, anxious enough about its corporate image to cancel an elaborate, expensive Pepsi campaign starring Madonna when religious fundamentalists threatened a boycott over an unrelated Madonna video clip featuring Christian icons.

"The show went a little bit further than we'd hoped," Mr. Liguori said.

"To work again," he added, "it needs to be different again." That means, he continued, that "we have ruled out" a second live "In Living Color" for next year's stunt.

Mr. Coleman was philosophical. "When you're looking to distinguish yourself, you take some risks," he said. "From our perspective, it would have been fine if Fox had 'bleeped' it, but we had no control over that."

Until the next Super Bowl, Mr. Coleman, whose company had revenues last year of \$10 million, is busy on other deals, including a music related project that he hopes to announce later this month. And he is helping to plan Mr. Jackson's coming international concert tour, the third for Pepsi; television commercials are due to be filmed next month,



Jay Coleman, the founder and president of Entertainment Marketing and Communications International Ltd., brings together entertainers and marketers, to exploit consumers' fascination with popular culture.